

Benson Vows Hands Off County Birch Organization

By ARTHUR D. POSTAL
Staff Writer

The John Birch Society opened a Washington office yesterday with its representative cautioning newsmen his job will not conflict with the task of W. Paul Winzer Jr. of Middletown, the group's coordinator in a three-state area.

The new outpost, only four blocks from the White House, will be the office of Reed A. Benson, a son of President Eisenhower's Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson.

Benson said that his job will involve public relations and the educational field, and will not interfere at all with the task of Winzer, Jr. of Middletown.

Benson said Winzer's task will be "directing chapters and recruiting," and added that to him he hopes to pass on names of interested persons.

Benson, 37, a former missionary of the Mormon Church, said Birch Society Founder Robert Welch pays him. "over \$12,000 a year to be part of the Society's far-flung network of the American Opinion Speaker's Bureau, operating unit of the John Birch Society.

"Mr. Welch was nice to me once when he hired me at \$12,000 a year," Benson said. "and he has been nice to me ever since."

Benson commented on the paradox of the location of his new office, where three United Nations' offices are in the same building, and recalled the group's difficulty in finding someone willing to rent space to them.

The Society signed contracts for offices in at least three other



Reed A. Benson

buildings, he said, only to be turned down when the contracts reached the "higher echelons."

Asked why he didn't invoke the 1964 Civil Rights Act to gain admittance, Benson said: "We don't believe in this act, and don't want to be where we are not wanted."

His comments about the inability to rent an office sent reporters scurrying to the offices of the resident landlord, Hymen Ritzenberg, who said briefly: "I hate the society."

Benson said that the group opened regional offices in Houston, Chicago, Los Angeles and other cities before coming to Washington because, "we are limited by funds and members."

He added that Washington has few Birch members, but said, (Continued On Page Five)

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"We expect Winzer to help us here." The Middletown man is organizer in Washington, Maryland, and part of West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Benson estimated Birch Society membership at between 80,000 and 100,000 persons and added: "we are growing rapidly."

The official opening of the offices brought approximately 100 reporters and as many cameramen to the three-room suite on the 10th floor of the LaSalle Building at 1028 Connecticut Avenue in Washington.

Their host responded with dainty sandwiches and "Birch Beer," a product of Dutch Pennsylvania.